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Sahitya Akademi
New Delhi

Vidyapati Sewa Sansthan
Darbhanga

invite you to

meet the author

Ramdeo Jha





"The author, though he appeared in the field of literature only by the sixties of the last century, but began his achievements from the early beginning of his life. His ceaseless perseverance—illustrated by his never being absent from the classes during his school days, his not being a backbencher during his college life, as a teacher, never appearing in class unprepared to perform like an ambidextrous archer in the field of literature, the recording of his sense of wonder through his pen in every genre of writing, like story, fiction, essay, poetry, drama—gave him not only a distinct identity, but rather proved him to be a miracle in the field of Maithili literature very early in his life. He is famous as an unparallelled boon to Maithili language and literature on account of his aptitude, talent, writing capability, style of oration and penetrative research."

(Acharya Surendra Jha Suman about Dr.Ramdeo Jha)

A versatile genius, Dr. Ramdeo Jha was born in the year 1936 at Sahora, the village of his mother. Here he had his rearing in the culturally rich milieu of Mithila. All the various stories he used to hear from his maternal grandparents coupled with the theatricals of his maternal uncle (a great thespian of his time) filled poetic sensibility in him during his childhood. The literary world came to recognize him with the publication of his stories "Muda Aab Kee" and "Doo Thop Nore" in *Mithila Mihir* in 1955. Occassionly he used to write under the name 'Sapoot,' a nom de plume.

Originally a student of science, he matriculated in 1953.



Ramdeo Jha receiving Gold Medal from Honourable Dr. Zakir Hussain in 1962



Ramdeo Jha with his wife Dr. Yogamaya Jha

He dreamt of becoming a doctor, but under the influence of his teacher and mentor Pandit Chandranath Misra (himself a renowned scholar and poet) he opted for literature. It was a crucial decision of his life, which he boldly followed; hence changed the context and colour of his dream, and he became a doctor of letters. It was the advent of a writer and academician in making; thus on the basis of his sheer dedication, academic excellence and mettle he opened an avenue to start a grand odyssey of his life – a progression towards creative writing. Dr Ramdeo Jha opted for teaching as his métier and started teaching in S.P.College, Dumka and retired from Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga.

He is well-known for his distinguished and chequered career as a prolific writer, as an active campaigner and crusader for the cause of Maithili and as a theatre activist. Among his contemporaries, he has been the most ardent to support the literary movement "Post-Independent Maithili Story" and the subsequent surgery on the body politic of Maithili literature with the aim of providing fresh blood to it and making it more relevant and responsive to time, space and society. His stories written in response to this movement are "Manuk Santan Bhitariya Dhadhra," "Ekta Rahay Utami" etc; in these, the author deals with abstract human situations- - all the woes and pleasures, discord and contradiction of life. His first story collection *Eka Kheera:Teen Phank*(1965) was celebrated for its tender yet pulsating, heart-moving presentation of human values and relationship. Equally, *Manuka Santan* (1966) passed muster for its classic excellence. *Dhartee Mata* (1985) is the delineation of a society in the search of its lost identity and human relationship and its desire to join its original root.

But there is a shift in his stories written after the 1990s both in language, style and treatment. His thought, emotion and sensibility are more intense and condensed than ever before, while his language has an unusual depth

and earthiness with which he struggles to interpret the truth of life. Stories like 'Thamakal Ghari', 'Paraspar', 'Saheed Chauk', 'Aajee Maa', 'Ek Nimoodhanak Atmakatha' etc. touch the very core of human sensibility and once read these open-ended stories pervade the mind of readers and there is also no escape route for them to come out of their impact. The pain of the forlorn, exiled and marginalized sections of society. is the undertone of these stories. They have received the maximum emotional response from the readers. As a fiction writer, he has to his credit works like *Angrejee Phulaka Chitthee, Bahinaka Virog* and *Ramjori Kagtak Pankhi Par* published in a series in *Mithila Mihir* during 1960-63. Epistolary in style, this was a *sui generis* experiment in Maithili literature. Through the exchange of letters between two married ladies who have taken a sacred oath of friendship, the author takes us for a jaunt inside traditional Maithil society – to take a view of the reality inside the Haveli, the women inside it and their different roles, the pain and pleasure of their domestic life. The author presents a picturesque view of the culture, mores and tradition of the society. The most beautiful element of these works is the elegant language that has a feministic touch that made it popular among women.

Writing plays forms the core of his creative writing. A playwright of national eminence, he received Sahitya Akademi Award (1991) for his collections of seven plays named *Pasijhatta Pathar*. Based variously on history, mythology and contemporary themes, he has raised the issue of national importance and social concerns. His language has a natural flavour—direct and richly communicative. The playwright's technique and temper are innovative. Critics have rightly termed him a dramatist of realism and advocate of social change.

In fact almost all the areas of writing have been touched by this author, whether it is writing for children or dealing with profound subjects like folk literature; he writes with socio-



Ramdeo Jha receiving Sahitya Akademi Award form Birendra Kr Bhattacharyya



Ramdeo Jha receiving Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize from Prof. U.R. Anantha Murthy

cultural and anthropological insight. The latest jewel in his crown is his book *Maithili Lok Sahitya : Swaroop O Saundarya.* This path-breaking research book reveals the rich, aesthetic and salient facets of Maithili folk literature. But sadly, his stature as a poet remained eclipsed in spite his being a major voice of New Poetry in Maithili. Yet the poems he has composed, though few in number, exhibit the same vitality, conviction and authority.

Dr. Ramdeo's place is also among writers who command mastery as a critic, while being proficient in all other genres. His critical works like *Maithili Shaiva Sahitya* and *Maithili Shaiva Sahityak Bhumika*, brought to the notice of the literary world a hitherto unexplored and uncared for function of literature. Through his authentic research book *Umapati* (on a medieval dramatist) he brought an end to the debate and confusion regarding the authenticity of the period and identity of this great dramatist – a debate that had been going on throughout the century. The penchant to explore such hidden treasures of old and medieval literature and manuscripts led this scholar-nomad to direct and indirect access to the Durbar library of Nepal, the valleys and temples of that country and the library of Cambridge University. The literary world has often reserved its encomium for his research and critical writing such as *Jagajjyotiirmalla, Jagat prakashmalla, Nandipati GeetiMala, HargauriVivaha Natak, KunjbiharNatak, Khodas Geetam* and many others.

Readers get access to an altogether different side of his genius when they come across his translation works. He recaptures the flavour and flow of the original as he proves it in *Sagai* ,translation from Urdu of *Ek Chadar Maili See* by Rajinder Singh Bedi for which Dr. Ramdeo Jha was honoured with Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize in 1994.

A prodigious presenece in the world of letters, his writing knows no bounds and like many a major doyen of the past and present, he has single-handedly moulded our attitudes towards many aspects of Maithili literature and has added significantly to it. He is a serious devotee of art and learning – a true man of faith for whom the question of belief and disbelief is absurd as true art aims at suspension of both belief and disbelief. His readers often get wonderstruck by the magic of his words but the wonder that we feel is both spontaneous and easy; and yet, this very ease is the cause of our wonder.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

STORY-COLLECTIONS

Eka kheera Teen phank	1965
Manuka Santan	1966
Dhartee Mata	1985

NOVELS

Ijotee Rani	1967
Angrejee Phulak Chitthee	2002
Bahinak Birog	2002
Ramjori Kagtak Pankhi Par	2002

PLAYS

Pasijhait Pathar	1989

Folk Lore

Maithili Loksahitya: Swaroop O Saundarya	2002

RESEARCH AND CRITICISM

SakuntalaNatak: Ek Adhyayan	1959
Parvati Parinaya Natak : Ek adhyayan	1960
Maithili Shaiva Sahitya	1979
Umapati	1980
Maithili Shaiva Sahityak Bhumika	1982
Jagatprakashmalla	1990
Jagajjyotirmalla	1995
Janardan Jha Jansidan	1998

TRANSLATION

Banabhatta	1998
Sagai	1992

EDITED WORKS

Nandipati Geetmala	1965
Ramvijay Natak o Vargeet	1967
Hargaurivivah Natak	1971
Nepalak Shilotkirn Maithili Geet	1972
Kunjabihar Natak	1976
Maithili Bhasa Sarita	1984
Dashavatar Nrityam O Khodas Geetam	1988
Maithili Prachin GeetManjari	1991
Durgacharit Natak	1996
Maithili Prachin Geetavali	1977
Kavivar Jeevan Jha Rachanavali	1980
Vidyapati Geetsanchaya	1999
Maithili Katha: Satabdi Sanchaya	2005

A CHRONOLOGY

1936 born on 3 May at Sahora (Disst. Darbhanga, Bihar)

1955 Passed Matriculation in the First Division

1956 Awarded Best Actor Award in the drama held on the occasion of All India Maithili Writers' Meet

1957-59 Joint President of Akhil Vartiya Sahitya Parisad, Darbhanga

Remained member of its Executive Committee for three decades

1959 B.A. with Hons. in Maithili, Gold Medal, University of Bihar

Publication of his first book *Sakuntala:Ek Adhayayan*

Marriage with Yogamaya Jha

1960-61 Gen. Secretary, Patna college Maithili Sahitya Parisad, Patna University

1961 M.A. in Maithili, with Gold Medal from Patna University

Appointed Lecturer in S.P. College Dumka (Jharkhand)

1963 Appointed Lecturer in C.M.College on the recommendation of Bihar Public Service Commission

1965 Publication of the first story collection *Eka Kheera Teen Phank*

1970 Received degree of Ph.D. from Patna University

1973 Appointed at the P.G. Department of Maithili, L.N. Mithila University, Darbhanga

1978-80 Member of Senate and Faculty of Arts, L.N.M.U.

1980 Reader in the P.G. Department of Maithili at L.N.M.U.

1985 University Professor in the P.G. Deptt. of Maithili at L.N.M. University

1988-97 Member, Maithili Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi

1991 Received Sahitya Akademi Award

1994 Received Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize

1996 Retired from the post of University Professor

1998-2002 Member General Council and Convenor of Maithili Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi

2004 Honoured with Mithila Bhibhuti Samman by 'Vidyapati Sewa Sansthan'.